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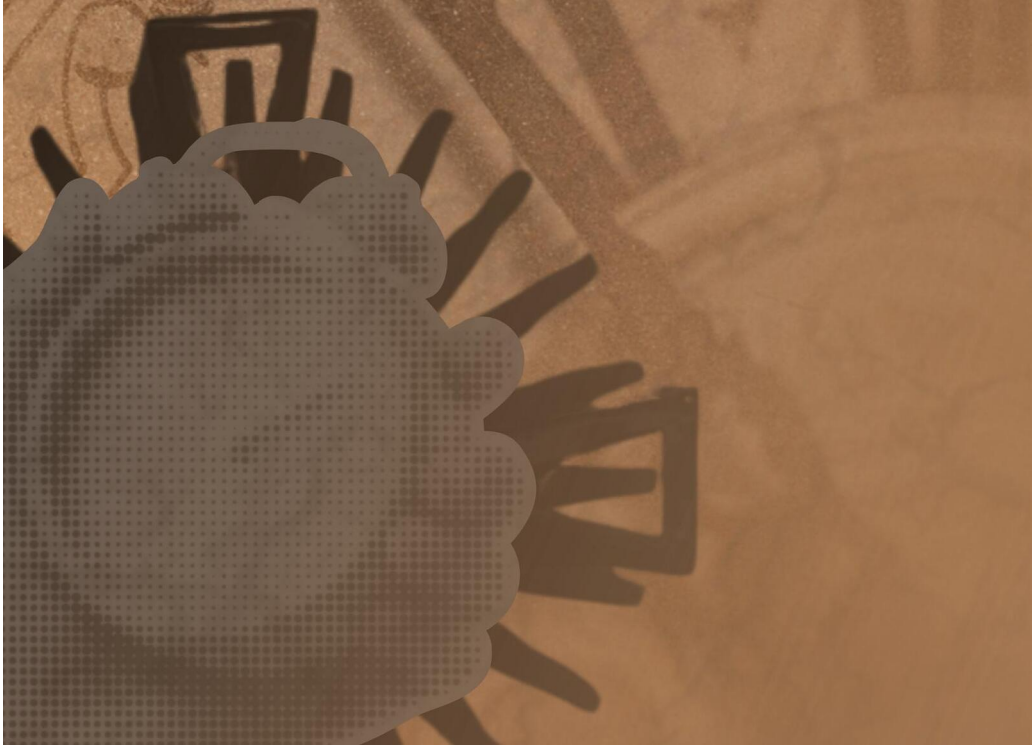
READING THE SIGNS OF OUR *TIME*

REFLECTIONS ON NEWS, FAITH, AND THE DIGITAL WORLD



James Roa

Reading the Signs of Our Time

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Reading the Signs of Our Time

This collection of reflections comes from a weekly practice called the Digital Examen. Throughout the semester, we were asked to observe the news around us and read these events through the lens of Scripture. Instead of reacting quickly to headlines, the exercise encouraged us to pause and reflect on what these events reveal about society, human struggles, and the role of faith in understanding them.

Each reflection in this collection connects a current news story with a passage from the liturgy. The goal was not simply to summarize events, but to interpret them more deeply. The Digital Examen invites us to recognize the "signs of the times" and to see how faith continues to speak even in the middle of political issues, disasters, digital misinformation, and everyday concerns.

These reflections were written during a specific moment in time. They reflect the questions, tensions, and hopes present in our society today. They are not final answers to complex problems. Instead, they are attempts to look at the world more attentively and to understand how faith can guide our response to the realities we encounter.

2

As the Noise of the World Meets the Word of God

As the Noise of the World Meets the Word of God
(November 26, 2025)

The Iglesia ni Cristo rally in Manila brought thousands of people to Quirino Grandstand. They demanded action against corruption linked to flood control projects. They stated that the problem involves individuals who used positions for personal gain. They rejected the idea that the issue should fade without response. The event revealed deep frustration with public systems and the lack of accountability in major projects. It also showed a clear expectation from citizens. They want leaders who handle public resources with discipline and honesty. I read this event through the Gospel from last week, Luke 19:11 to 28, which presents the Parable of the Ten Gold Coins.

The Gospel focuses on responsibility. A ruler gives resources to servants and instructs them to use these resources well. Some do the work with discipline. One refuses to act. The ruler praises those who increased what they received. He judges the one who hid the coin. The message is direct. You do not waste what you are given. You do not ignore duty. You do not hide behind excuses. You act with clarity. You show results. This becomes a strong lens for the rally. Corruption shows the opposite behavior. People in authority receive public resources, but they do not use them for the common good. They waste funds. They distort systems. They place personal interest over public duty. The Gospel exposes this failure. The unfaithful servant resembles people who misuse power. The story shows that wrongdoing brings loss, not reward.

The Gospel also highlights accountability. The ruler returns and asks for results. This mirrors the call of the rally. Citizens want officials to answer for their actions. They want agencies to explain the irregularities in flood control projects. They want consistent oversight. The reading supports this expectation. The ruler does not ignore failure. The ruler confronts it. The ruler demands truth. The story reveals a pattern. Authority without accountability leads to decay. The rally shows that people recognize this problem in present life.

This event is a sign of the times. Citizens understand the damage caused by corruption. They see unsafe communities because of weak infrastructure. They see repeated scandals in public works. They see how slow action allows wrongdoing to continue. The Gospel helps interpret this moment. The servants who act with discipline show how leadership should look. They present an example of responsible work. They protect what they receive. They serve the ruler with honesty. This speaks to leaders today. Public office is a trust. Misuse of resources is not only a political

issue. It is a moral failure.

The Gospel offers a challenge for a Christian communicator. You must promote responsible stewardship. You must speak about corruption with clear facts. You must form audiences with discipline, not fear. You must highlight the link between duty and public welfare. You protect truth. You help people understand the moral stakes of public decisions. You avoid content that distracts from accountability. You support efforts that expose wrongdoing. You remind people that authority always requires results.

The link between the rally and the Gospel forms one message. Public trust depends on responsible use of power. The Parable of the Ten Gold Coins shows the value of faithful service. The rally shows the public demand for that service. A Christian communicator takes this as a call to promote truth, integrity, and responsible leadership.

Photo from The ***Philippine Star*** *showing the Iglesia ni Cristo rally at the Quirino Grandstand in Manila.*

3

Truth in the Age of Digital Voices

Truth in the Age of Digital Voices
(December 11, 2025)

In early December, several areas in Mindanao experienced severe flooding due to continuous heavy rains. News reports showed families evacuating from submerged homes, roads turning into rivers, and rescue teams working day and night to reach isolated communities. For many residents, the flood did not only damage property but disrupted daily life, education, and livelihood. Behind every report of rising water levels were people waiting on rooftops, parents protecting their children, and communities uncertain about what would remain when the water finally receded.

Reading this news alongside Isaiah 35:1–6, 10 offers a deeper perspective on suffering and hope. The passage speaks of transformation in places that seem lifeless. The desert blooms, the weak are strengthened, and sorrow turns into joy. This reading does not ignore hardship. Instead, it acknowledges pain while pointing toward healing and renewal. The promise is not immediate escape from suffering, but assurance that brokenness will not have the final word.

When placed beside the flooding in Mindanao, the reading becomes especially meaningful. Floodwaters reveal how fragile human life is. Homes that took years to build disappear in hours. Livelihoods vanish overnight. Nature reminds humanity of its limits. Yet Isaiah's message speaks precisely into this vulnerability. God does not abandon wounded land or wounded people. The image of blooming deserts becomes a symbol of recovery after devastation.

This event reveals important signs of the times. Climate patterns have become increasingly unpredictable. Floods, typhoons, and droughts occur more frequently and with greater intensity. The poor suffer the most because they often live in areas more exposed to danger and lack resources for recovery. This reality calls not only for technical solutions but also for moral reflection. How do societies protect vulnerable communities? How do governments prepare responsibly? How do individuals respond with compassion instead of indifference?

In the midst of disaster, the response of communities reflects Isaiah's promise in quiet ways. Neighbors help one another evacuate. Volunteers distribute food, clothes, and medicine. Local officials organize shelters and relief operations. These actions may seem small compared to the scale of destruction, yet they become signs of renewal. Restoration begins not with miracles, but

with human solidarity. In these moments, the desert starts to bloom through compassion.

Isaiah's reading also offers a critique of modern attitudes. Too often, disasters become headlines that fade quickly from attention. Suffering becomes temporary content. The reading challenges this short memory. It invites long-term commitment to healing. It reminds believers that hope is not passive waiting, but active participation in rebuilding lives and communities.

For a Christian communicator, this event carries a clear responsibility. You do not reduce suffering to numbers or spectacle. You tell stories that preserve dignity. You highlight courage, not only tragedy. You resist sensationalism and promote understanding. Communication becomes a form of service. Through careful reporting and reflection, you help audiences see not only damage, but resilience.

The reading also invites hope without denial. Hope does not pretend the flood did not happen. It acknowledges loss, grief, and fear. But it also insists that restoration is possible. Isaiah speaks of the blind seeing and the lame walking. In modern terms, this means broken systems can heal, traumatized communities can recover, and wounded people can rebuild.

This reflection teaches an important lesson about faith in times of disaster. Faith does not remove suffering. It gives meaning to endurance. It does not stop floods. It strengthens those who must face them. The people of Mindanao did not wait for waters to recede before helping one another. They acted in the middle of crisis. In the end, this news story and this reading meet at a single truth. Even when land is flooded and lives are shaken, hope continues quietly. The desert will bloom, not because suffering disappears, but because compassion refuses to stop. And in that refusal, faith becomes visible.

4

As Every Ride Feels Heavier

As Every Ride Feels Heavier
(February 12, 2026)

In the past week, commuters in Metro Manila have been dealing with an increase in fare prices for jeepneys and other public transportation. News reports and social media conversations show frustration among students, workers, and ordinary citizens who depend on affordable public transport to earn a living, go to school, and support their families. Many are expressing concern that higher fares will force them to choose between basic needs, such as food and transportation. What might be a simple economic issue actually affects people's daily dignity, rhythm of life, and sense of stability. For commuters, every trip involves work, deadlines, responsibilities, and relationships, and fare increases make an already challenging commute even heavier.

This week's Gospel reading from Mark 1:29–39 stood out to me as I reflected on this news. In this passage, Jesus heals Simon's mother-in-law, and afterward, many who were sick and burdened came to Him for healing and peace. Jesus does not only cure physical illness; He cares for the whole person. He meets them in their need, their weariness, and their struggle. After healing, Jesus also rises early to pray, indicating that even in deep ministry, He seeks grounding and connection with God.

When I connect the story of public transportation struggles with this Gospel, I see an invitation to understand human burdens not merely as problems to fix, but as realities that call for compassion and care. Commuters are not statistics. They are mothers and fathers, students and employees, children with hopes and fears. The fare increase is not only economic. It deepens everyday stress, forces compromises, and alters people's sense of well-being. Just like the crowds in the Gospel who brought their sick and burdened to Jesus, these commuters carry an invisible load that goes beyond money. It touches hearts, families, and dreams.

The way Jesus responds in the Gospel teaches a reflection on how to attend to human suffering and struggle. Jesus does not hurry through healing or push people away; He sits with them, listens, and brings restoration. He understands that healing is not only about physical wholeness, but about human dignity. For those who are tired, the invitation is not to rush toward solutions alone, but to pause and seek solidarity, presence, and listening. And just as Jesus rises early to pray before moving on with His day, this reminds me that caring for others also requires inner grounding — a reminder that we must also find rest and connection with our own source of

strength.

In today's digital world, news travels fast, and issues like fare hikes quickly become trending topics on social media. Many voices respond with outrage, memes, or sarcastic comments. But deep reflection calls for more than immediate reactions. It calls for empathy and thoughtful engagement. A Christian communicator's role in this context involves telling the stories behind the statistics, amplifying the voices of those affected, and reminding others that every social issue touches the human heart. In Mark's Gospel, Jesus did not quickly dismiss the crowd after healing them. He stayed with them long enough to ensure they were cared for. This teaches us that real engagement with social issues requires sustained attention, not momentary outrage.

This reflection changes how I see the issue of fare hikes. It is not only a policy concern. It is a human concern. People are tired of making hard choices daily. They are tired of systems that seem indifferent to their struggle. They are looking for signs of hope and compassion. The Gospel invites us to respond not only with opinions but with solidarity — by listening, sharing stories, and connecting with those whose burdens are heavier today.

In conclusion, the news of transportation fare increases exposes a burden carried by many. The Gospel reading teaches that real care begins with recognition, listening, and presence. It calls not only for social awareness, but for compassionate engagement. This week's reflection invites us to remember that behind every headline are real people whose dignity deserves attention, care, and hope.

*Photo from **DZMM TeleRadyo** covering the increase in jeepney and public transportation fares in February 2026.*

5

When Silence Speaks

When Silence Speaks

(February 05, 2026)

The Film *Silence* helped me realize that living faith online is not always going to be about speaking louder, posting more things, or constantly defending beliefs in public spaces. The story made me reflect on how faith can remain real even when it is hidden, questioned, or quietly carried, especially in a digital environment where being seen often feels like being worth something. Seeing the difference between Garupe's public and heroic death and Ferreira's hidden and painful survival made me think about how digital spaces often reward performance, certainty, and strong opinions, while leaving little room for doubt, silence, and inner struggle.

What truly stayed with me was the final image of Rodrigues being buried with a small crucifix hidden in his hands. When that scene finally made sense to me, I realized that faith in this digital world does not always have to be looking loud, viral, or like convincing to others. Sometimes it just looks like choosing integrity when no one is watching, resisting the pressure to constantly explaining myself online, and allowing belief to remain personal even when the internet demands constant visibility.

The film also showed me that silence does not automatically mean absence. In this digital world full of noises, reactions, and judgments, silence can become the space where faith is protected, tested, and lived gently, without the needing of validation, applause, or public approval.

Scene from the film **Silence** *(2016), directed by Martin Scorsese, portraying the struggle of faith during the persecution of Christians in Japan..*

6

Hope in Difficult Times

Hope in Difficult Times
(February 18, 2026)

In the recent news across the Philippines, discussions about the spread of misinformation and online manipulation continues to surface, especially in every social media platforms where there is political narratives, rumors, and emotionally charged posts that is being spread rapidly. Several reports and commentaries have pointed out how digital spaces have become environments where information moves faster than reflection. Many people share posts instantly, often without verifying their sources, and the result is confusion, division, and mistrust. In a country where social media plays a major role in shaping public opinion, the digital environment can easily become overwhelming and noisy.

This recent situation in the Philippines reminded me about the Gospel reading from Mark 7:14-23, where Jesus speaks about what truly defiles a person. In this passage, Jesus explains that it is not what enters a person from the outside that will make them unclean, but what comes from within their human hearts. He lists things such as deceit, pride, envy, and evil intentions as the true sources of corruption. Looking at this passage in light of the current digital issue made me realize that misinformation is not only a technological problem but also a human one. Technology only amplifies what already exists in the human heart.

When people share misleading information or harmful narratives online, it is often driven by deeper motivations such as anger, fear, or the desire to belong to a certain group. Social media does not create these emotions, but it gives them a louder microphone. Because of this, digital communication requires not only technical literacy but also moral discipline. The gospel reminds us that our words and actions reveal what truly lives inside us. This truth becomes even more important in digital spaces where a single post or comment can reach thousands of people instantly.

As someone who is studying communication in this digital age, this reflection challenges me to approach online information with responsibility. Being a Christian communicator does not simply mean sharing religious messages online. It also means practicing discernment before speaking, posting, or reacting. In an environment where many voices compete for attention, it is easy to be carried away by emotion or by the pressure to respond quickly. But the Gospel suggests

another path: one that begins with examining the intentions of the heart.

This also means resisting the culture of instant reaction that dominates many digital platforms. The design of social media encourages quick responses, fast opinions, and constant engagement. However, discernment requires the opposite thing, it requires patience, reflection, and sometimes silence. Not every trending topic requires an immediate reaction. Sometimes the most responsible response is to pause, verify information, and consider whether what we share contributes to truth or confusion.

This reflection also reminds me that the role of a Christian communicator is not simply to win arguments or gain attention online. Instead, it is to foster understanding, clarity, and honesty. Truth should not be reduced to a weapon used to defeat others in online debates. Rather, it should be a light that helps people see reality more clearly. In a digital environment filled with competing narratives, maintaining this attitude becomes a form of witness.

Looking at the news through the Gospel reveals that the struggle against misinformation is not only about correcting facts but also about cultivating integrity. If the heart is disciplined and guided by truth, digital communication can become a space for meaningful dialogue instead of division. But if the heart is driven by pride, anger, or manipulation, technology will only magnify the same destructive tendencies.

In the end, this week's reflection reminded me that the challenge of the digital world is not simply technological but spiritual. The tools we use every day are powerful, but their impact ultimately depends on the intentions of the people using them. The Gospel is calling us to examine those intentions carefully. Only then can digital communication become a place where truth is preserved and shared responsibly.

Photo from the Senate of the Philippines during a Senate committee hearing addressing the spread of disinformation in the Philippines, February 2026.

About the Author

James Roy N. Roa is a first-year aspirant at St. Paul Seminary Formation. His writing grows out of ordinary moments of reflection. Sometimes those moments come from the news, sometimes from prayer, and sometimes from the quiet realization that he does not understand the world as clearly as he thought he did. Through the practice of the Digital Examen, he tries to slow down and pay attention to what is happening around him and within him.

These reflections do not come from someone who already has answers. They come from someone who is still learning how to listen, how to question, and how to see faith in the middle of real situations that affect people every day. James writes in the hope that reflection can help people notice the deeper meaning behind events that often pass quickly in the noise of the digital world.